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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9238
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0669
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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0816
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 000489

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [GB](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: EUROPEAN FORCE FOR DRC ELECTIONS DEPLOYING, BUT
EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONABLE

REF: LIBREVILLE 257

Classified By: DCM Katherine Dhanani. Reason: 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (C) Colonel (retired) Ernst Elbers, military advisor at the German Embassy in Libreville, provided a July 19 briefing on EUFOR deployment to EUCOM Deputy Commander General Ward. He explained that the force's political direction will be set by the EU Political and Security Committee in Brussels, its Operational Headquarters will be in Potsdam under Lieutenant General Viereck (German) and its Force Headquarters will be in Kinshasa under Major General Damay (French). About 750 troops will be stationed in Kinshasa, with another 1250 on standby in Libreville, Gabon and a special forces element based in Port Gentil, Gabon. Germany's bundestag has authorized 780 German soldiers, but has restricted their movement in Congo to the city limits of inshasa. France will deploy a similar number of forces, with other EU members contributing smaller, often specialized, units. Even EU-hopeful Turkey is participating, with a transport plane and crew stationed in Libreville. Elbers said that deployment to Libreville is on track, but that Kinshasa is not ready to receive its full contingent of troops. He indicated that European politics dictate that all appear to be proceeding smoothly, so troops destined for Kinshasa are being sent to Libreville to sit around until Kinshasa is ready to receive them. (Note: EUFOR has strained Libreville's hotels beyond capacity; General Ward's plane crew overnighted in Cameroon because there were no beds available in Libreville.)

¶2. (C) Elbers expressed strong skepticism about EUFOR's mission. From a military point of view, he said, a force of 2000 is too small to have any practical impact, even within the confines of Kinshasa. He compared EUFOR to Nazi Germany's deployment of half a million soldiers to Stalingrad. Elbers views EUFOR as a political gesture that will fail to serve its symbolic purpose the instant it is called upon to act. It could be useful, however, for evacuating Europeans from Kinshasa. Although training for noncombatant evacuations will be carried out in Libreville, EUFOR will keep this quiet, since any public discussion of this possible mission could undermine the confidence EUFOR is being sent out to bolster.

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